

REGULAR MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE FALLS CHURCH PLANNING COMMISSION

1 October 2007

Council Chamber

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Rodgers called the meeting to order at 7:58 PM.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Ms. Budetti

Ms. Fauber

Mr. Lawrence

Mr. Puentes

Ms. Rodgers

Ms. Teates

Member Absent:

Ms. Sanders

Administrative Staff Present:

Ms. Friel, General Manager of Development
Services and Planning Director

Ms. Block Sanford, Principal Planner

3. PLANNING COMMISSION REPORTS:

Mr. Puentes drew the Planning Commission's attention to a symposium open to the public for a small charge at the Building Museum on October 23rd, Tuesday morning, entitled "The Art of Making Great Places Green Places," put together by the American Planning Association, American Institute of Certified Planners.

Mr. Lawrence reported to the Commission he spent the past Monday and Tuesday down in Richmond, Virginia, attending a planning course which by the end of the year would result in his certification as a Planning Commissioner for the State of Virginia.

Ms. Fauber informed the Commission this past Wednesday night she attended the first meeting of the East Falls Church Transportation Land Use Study, a cooperative planning group between Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. The meetings are open to the public and are held at the firehouse community room. She and Don Rea of Gresham

MINUTES OF THE 1 OCTOBER 2007 MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
APPROVED 15 OCTOBER 2007

PAGE 1

Place were appointed as representatives of the City, Staff is represented by Ms. Block Sanford, and Metro and VDOT are also represented. She reports Arlington has strong representation being as the Study primarily affects Arlington. This is a coordinated transportation effort with input into the land uses within Arlington County right above the station area which will be addressed when there is joint development.

Ms. Fauber reports that one of the things agreed on is that although there are political, tax, school, and public safety demarcations, both Falls Church City and Arlington concurred that the area should read as one and that the heights in Arlington should be sympathetic with the heights that Falls Church is approving. Streetscape, bike plans, and pedestrian plans should all read as one so that the area has its own identity.

She further reports a lot of things are happening in East Falls Church, not only on the Arlington side but with the development plan within the City. It is estimated it will take about a year and a half to prepare the report.

Chair Rodgers asked for clarification on whether this involved the area around the East Falls Church Metro, directly adjacent to it, or more on Lee Highway-North Washington Street, thinking there was more residential development in that area.

Ms. Fauber replied that it involved both areas. There is residential present but there are some commercial portions still left that are undeveloped. One of the issues being studied is if there is development above the station itself where the parking lot is, how is that to be reconfigured, what kind of uses would it have, what heights, or would it just be a parking garage. That issue has yet to be decided.

Ms. Block Sanford noted the meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month.

Ms. Fauber pointed out a walking tour would take place in November. The next meeting is October 24th at 7 p.m.

She reports that people are talking about the South Four Mile Run issue and she is sure that it will be brought up as part of the study. She finds it encouraging that there was discussion about putting emphasis in bike and pedestrian traffic.

She further reports the traditional sector planning in Arlington County was a quarter mile radius as a walking radius. It was pointed out that the radius for walking to that station is much larger than a quarter of a mile, more like a half a mile or up to a mile for many people.

Ms. Budetti remarked that she hopes that they take into account ridership as well as development because it's becoming somewhat unpleasant traveling on most mornings and seating is only available at the first few stations. Trains need to be reconfigured to get people to stand in the middle of the train. The way the current system is set up it is difficult for many people to stand comfortably and safely; however the A car trains are an

improvement. She knows they're putting other shelters up but she is sure the ridership has hugely increased over the last five years.

Ms. Budetti also called to the Commission's attention that she forwarded an e-mail from the City arborist regarding the property that was along the Four Mile Stream that was discussed regarding how to deal with the bamboo that had grown in there. She expressed concern about taking all the bamboo out and wanted to know what protections had had envisioned for the stream and the land in the interim. Ms. Budetti informed the Commission that she was sent a comprehensive description of how the plan addresses the problem which she was pleased to receive.

4. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS: None.

5. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT/WORKSESSION SCHEDULE:

Ms. Friel reported there is a request to move the CIP New Business A to the front of the agenda to accommodate Ms. Mester (Assistant City Manager) who was due over at the City Council for their worksession.

There was not objection to moving on to new business and it was agreed to finish Ms. Friel's report and then move to new business.

Ms. Friel reported the Northgate Site Plan has been submitted, and will come back again. The Gateway Special Exception, there is continuing work with the applicant and it is expected back in October, early November for another worksession before proceeding through the process. The Commission passed on the recommendation of Little Falls Street for bed and breakfast, and that is continuing on to the BZA for the 11th of October and there is no outcome yet on that.

In response to Ms. Budetti's question about what she considers serious changes to the site plan of the Read building regarding elimination of approved planting areas in front of the building, the landscape wall and the buffer perimeter, Ms. Friel reported that there is an issue with how the project was built and that most things on the list have been remedied through the Site Plan. She states that in the developer's preliminary report to the Commission about the drive-thru, there was no mention there would be an ATM co-located with that drive-thru. City Staff consulted on how ATM and drive-thrus were handled in the past and it was noted if they're co-located in the same physical location, there hasn't been an additional use permit required.

Other items are still being worked on. She also notes there was a rush of teachers that needed to get in the units and they're working with the developer about holding bonds as well as certificates of occupancy to insure full compliance and she will report later as things progress.

In response to Mr. Puentes' comment about City Council meeting in worksession today to talk about the affordable housing plan or a revision to the City Code about affordable housing, Ms. Friel reported it wasn't this evening but Ms. Mester could address that issue.

Ms. Mester reports that the Council took action on that for first reading at this past Monday's meeting. It's a City Charter change that would provide Council an additional tool for affordable housing and it was subsequently given the authority to adopt it for their ordinance which Staff is proposing would be considered a part of the zoning rewrite. Today the Board's and Commission's referrals were sent out, Ms. Friel and the Chair for the Planning Commission have been sent its formal review for that City Charter change. It returns back to Council October 22nd for public hearing and second reading and referral comments are requested by October 15th. There are two charter changes, in that package also is provided the demographic data and background to explain the affordable housing component along with a change to the city attorney contract requirements.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

A. ORDINANCE T07-12, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE BUDGET OF EXPENDITURE AND REVENUES AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2007-08 (EAST WING REMODELING PROJECT)

Ms. Mester reported this item was discussed at the September 17th worksession. Council has referred it to the Planning Commission for formal consideration and recommendation at their September 10th meeting and it is in response to Council direction to Staff to pursue options to improve customer service and building accessibility in City Hall, particularly the first floor east wing. Because of the breath of this project and it being developed after the CIP was adopted, it does require an amendment and it is being brought back for the Commission's consideration.

Attachment 2 describes the project. It's designed to provide a relief valve for 3 to 5 years in City Hall to address lack of a visible business counter, easier public access to high traffic offices, increased ADA compliance, and provide for more efficient accessible employee workspace.

The Project is estimated to cost \$425,000. The IFB closes tomorrow (October 2, 2007), after which we'll have the construction estimates. The project is split between 65 percent General Fund, the remainder to the Water Fund. This is schedule to come back to Council on October 9th for budget amendment, CIP amendment, and if both are approved, the contract award for the project. The Commission's packet includes the amendment to the pages for the CIP as adopted, the General Fund summary, the Water Fund summary, the 5 year financial forecast, and a layout for the floor plans.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Ms. Mester reported that since the Planning Commission last viewed the amendment at worksession, there have been no

changes made and drew the Commission's attention to Attachment 3 which has the General Fund summaries. Under Public Works highlighted in gray, City Hall East Wing, \$275,000 goes to the General Fund and \$150,000 goes to the Water Fund for a 65-35 split. She reports that if approved by Council on October 9th, construction will start on October 19th; the Commissioner of Revenue and Treasurer will move to the Training Center the weekend of October 13th and 14th. Future Council worksessions are rescheduled to take place at the Community Center as well as any standing board and commission meetings that were in the Training Center. The Library and Cherry Hill Farmhouse will be made available for in between ad hoc meetings.

Ms. Budetti remarked that she was quickly trying to compare that information with Attachment One where it adds \$455,000 of revenues and expenditure to the General Fund and adds \$522,000 to the Water Fund revenue and expenditures. She requested more information regarding expenditure and revenue.

Ms. Mester replied that because of accumulation with some of the other projects, if you take the East Wing City Hall project dollar amount of \$425,000, then it would split between the two funds.

Ms. Budetti remarked that occasionally there is an amendment to the CIP and inquired what the impetus was for the change itself, to start it then and rather not include it into next year's budget plan.

Ms. Mester reported the impetus came from a lot of complaints and concerns. Council has been hearing from the community in terms of accessibility and confusion regarding the building itself. With the long range feasibility study and master plan process currently under way as a CIP project for this year, it wasn't going to address anything for 5 to 10 years out, and in looking at solutions it became clear a minor cosmetic fix wouldn't alleviate the major problems they identified. So it developed clearly into a CIP project, one that they wanted to address now, and so it was brought forward.

Chair Rodgers commented that she is glad to see that DMV will be more prominently situated due to the large number of inquiries as to where it is located.

Ms. Mester explained the DMV, as you come in the east wing and look to your left, instead of seeing the blank wall of customer service and the closed door to the registrar, you'll see open glass walls and glass doors clearly demarking the Treasurer, Commissioner of Revenue and DMV Select. She further remarked that last year Mr. Clinton said there were 9000 visits to the office so clearly it is a high demand, well-received service.

MOTION: Mr. Lawrence moved, and Ms. Fauber seconded, that the Commission approve Ordinance T07-12 to amend the Budget of Expenditures and Revenues and the Capital Improvement Plan for the fiscal year 2007-2008 for the East Wing Remodeling Project.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

B. SPECIAL USE PERMIT U1470-04 (RENEWAL) BY RONALD BROUSSEAU, FOR FRIENDS OF FALLS CHURCH CHELTER, AND WYATT SHIELDS, CITY MANAGER OF THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH FOR A HOMELESS SHELTER TO BE OPERATED AT 217 GORDAN ROAD (LOTS 20, 21, 22, AND 23, ((2)) SECTION 3) OF THE FALLS CHURCH REAL PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION MAP, ZONED M-1 (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL)

Ms. Friel asked that this item be deferred. Although it was advertised for this meeting, it is not ready. She reported that the homeless shelter in the City has very specific code requirements listed in the City Code as to how it needs to operate. She notes the practice has gotten away from that and the Housing Department as well as the Friends of the Homeless Shelter are meeting and discussing and trying to bring it back to what the Code says how this area needs to operate. As this is a winter shelter and does not open until December 1st, there is additional time to come back with specific recommendations and conditions at the November 5th Planning Commission meeting.

Mr. Puentes asked for further elaboration of Ms. Friel's comment regarding inconsistencies in how the shelter is being used presently.

Ms. Friel indicated some of the standard conditions in the Use Permit regarding the homeless shelter are hours of operation, the way in which a client must be referred, which is they must be referred to by Fairfax County, no walk-ins, and monitoring of alcohol levels. She reports that the shelter has been operating more liberally and that maybe the Code needs to be changed because it is unusual to have those sort of specifics in the Code. She states that there are slight or large variations of those conditions currently, and at this time she cannot come before the Commission to recommend the Special Use Permit.

MOTION: Mr. Puentes moved, and Mr. Lawrence seconded, to continue the public hearing on Special Use Permit U1470-04 until the next Planning Commission meeting of October 15' 2007.

The Chair called for any further questions or discussion and heard no response.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION TR7-18, A RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, CHAPTER 4, LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TO ADOPT A REVISED CITY CENTER CONCEPT PLAN, ADD TRANSPORTATION ELEMENTS, AND CLARIFY TEXT

Ms. Block Sanford summarized as follows: Back in July the Council held a first reading and public hearing on the proposed Resolution to amend the City's Comprehensive Plan. Since then the Planning Commission has held three worksessions and this is the fourth public hearing on this item.

The Planning Commission has requested and received a 60 day extension from the City Council for its recommendation on this item.

By way of background, the City's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in October 2005. The Comprehensive Plan is the City policy guide for shaping the future of the City. The 2005 Plan that was adopted included a Concept Plan for the City Center.

Two summers ago in 2006, the City hired a consulting firm to complete a transportation plan for City Center. This work was holistic, had the overall goal of creating a walkable, connected public realm which included streets and open spaces and integral place-making components. The goal was to make the City Center a Great Place where pedestrians come first and sidewalks and streets look and feel like public living rooms.

The Transportation Plan which was the basis for this Comprehensive Plan Amendment contains existing and forecasted conditions for City Center analysis and recommendations.

The key recommendations that are now being forwarded in the proposed City Center Concept Plan include a comprehensive data- supported vision for future development, a human pedestrian scale environment, new critical pedestrian connections, a walkable City Center, and a Concept Plan that creates a common language that would set expectations for citizens, decision makers, and developers. This plan also allows the road system to work more efficiently.

The concepts that are in the Concept Plan are industry standard. What is being proposed in this plan is being seen all around the country. This Plan is critical to laying the bones for the City Center. It is critical for creating the walkable urban grounds that we're looking for. The Plan adds more open space and more pedestrian connections than are in the current concept plan.

One of the key goals is to create a common language and set expectations for everyone, citizens, decision makers, and developers. It is critical to get this Plan adopted and in use as a guide for City Center development.

There has been discussion about a number of changes that relate to the transportation elements of the Concept Plan. The other changes that have been incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan Amendment are listed on Page 3 of the Staff Report. They include:

The removal of the Intermodal Facility from the map.

Removal of direct references to the location of the Intermodal facility, but it is still mentioned that the Intermodal facility is important in the City Center.

Definition of Festival Street has been included.

The issue of commercial traffic on Festival Street has been included. There has been text added to state that these types of restrictions may be considered on a street-by-street basis.

A bicycle route has been shown on the Concept Plan.

Alleys have been renamed as C frontages to resolve any confusion to the fact that they are public streets.

There has been expanded information about the parking.

Text has been added to state that there would be approximately 140 new on-street parking spaces along and south of Broad Street and 70 additional spaces north of Broad Street.

In addition, stronger language has been added that the retail function of the Post Office should be incorporated into the City Center and there have been additional references to green building practices, LEED, and the use of native plants.

There have been a number of other changes that have been suggested and those are also listed in Attachment 2.

Ms. Block Sanford stressed the importance of this Plan and it being critical for laying the framework for City Center development. It is a transportation plan. It speaks only to transportation elements and it is critical for setting expectations and serving as a guide for City Center development.

Mr. Puentes noted that the VDOT comments came in since the Commission's last worksession and asked for more elaboration regarding them.

Ms. Block Sanford reported VDOT did an advisory review of Comprehensive Plan Amendments that would affect the road network which they maintain which would be Washington and Broad Streets. Overall what was found is that "the proposed street network will not have a significant impact on the regional traffic patterns. By providing vehicular traffic with more options, it can be anticipated that local traffic circulation will be enhanced." She reports this is their main finding.

Ms. Block Sanford explained VDOT has some minor suggestions, mainly noting for consistency items that are in the transportation plan and the Comp Plan Amendment. They recommend wider bike lanes than are recommended. But overall their findings are that the improvements suggested would help the regional network.

Mr. Puentes was very encouraged by VDOT's comments and thought they were very helpful along with their recognition of how this new vehicular pattern would actually improve conditions and not impede traffic. He was surprised to see the emphasis VDOT placed on the importance of including bicycle elements in the plan.

Ms. Block Sanford added that the VDOT comments are supportive and notes many other municipalities are proposing very similar changes to road networks. Adding streets, breaking up blocks helps pedestrians and they are taking more of a look at those types of roadway uses.

Mr. Puentes remarked that he had a concern about the "hint" to expand Broad Street to six lanes to accommodate the improvements, quote, unquote, that are happening on the other sides of the City. He urged to heed that as a caution as he doesn't think that is the right approach for the City at present but it is something obviously that will come up in the future.

Ms. Budetti noted that although we may certainly not want to have six lanes through the middle of Falls Church, there are six lanes coming in at the point where the high school is and there may be a need to take a really good look at that and keep that in the back of our minds. She further noted it is mentioned in a couple of places that Route 7 is expected to carry more traffic as well from other development so she thinks it is something that needs to be looked at for various reasons.

Chair Rodgers asked if VDOT's remarks were just comments to the Commission versus recommendations to which Ms. Block Sanford replied they are advisory.

Chair Rodgers further stated that in regard to the roundabout which VDOT says may be inadequate in several years, maybe it should be looked at in the frame of the Comp Plan because it's not going to service us with the added population.

As to the width of sidewalks, Chair Rodgers wondered in light of VDOT's recommendation regarding 6 foot versus 9.55 foot widths, if should be taken as an indication that that change should be made.

Ms. Block Sanford offered to share these comments with the consultant. Some of the comments about consistency can be corrected and she feels comfortable with the analysis about the roundabout and what the consultant has provided at this point. Careful attention was paid in studying the roundabout capacity and whether it could handle traffic and it was deemed that it definitely could.

Chair Rodgers commented VDOT's recommendations seemed to support the Commission's concerns. In regard to the intersection of the proposed alignment of the Little Falls extension, the report notes if done differently it would be "preferable for traffic flow, effectiveness of the signal network and pedestrian crossings," which was one of the things the Commission brought up in their review of the Transportation Plan.

Chair Rodgers also remarked that she thinks the Commission would have benefited significantly by having VDOT's comments much earlier and the only reason they were being looked at tonight is because of the deferment from the last meeting.

Ms. Block Sanford related the regulations actually came into effect in July of this year and it is actually up to each jurisdiction to determine whether or not what they are adopting needs to go to VDOT. They're not regulating that. Their comments are advisory. Staff opted to send it to VDOT for their review. VDOT did this with a very quick turn around. The process had already begun prior to the beginning of that. We might have been grandfathered not having sent this to VDOT for their comments but we chose to have their review.

Chair Rodgers inquired that since the regulations changed, if the Commission were just starting this process now, what would the process be and would the comments still be advisory.

Ms. Block Sanford reports that VDOT comments are always advisory. The regulations took effect in July so anything begun before July, it could be argued did not need to go to VDOT because the process had started actually before that. Staff spoke with them and talked about it. It was decided to go ahead and sent it. VDOT said they could do an expedited review so that we could have their comments prior to a decision.

Chair Rodgers remarked that The City Center Concept Plan Map, before and after the worksession, looks the same and inquired where the new public open space on the south side of City Center is located.

Ms. Block Sanford replied the new open space is referred to since the adopted Comprehensive Plan and it is the triangular area south of the roundabout.

In response to Ms. Budetti's question on exactly which map VDOT used when referring to width of the sidewalks, Ms. Block Sanford replied that they had the entire transportation plan to review. They were reviewing the Comp Plan Amendment and the City Transportation, looking at a cross-section in its entirety.

Mr. Lawrence commended staff in pulling together a tremendous amount of information. He directed attention to page 3, line 120, "Festival streets can accommodate major loading and truck traffic." He thought a decision was made there should be no loading, let alone major, adding that it was not envisioned having a line of loading bays on a festival street.

Ms. Block Sanford reported that was discussed and what Staff is recommending is that it be considered on a case-by-case basis rather than making a blanket statement that they would not be allowed on all Festival Streets. She explained that a Festival Street is really a public street that can on occasion, albeit infrequently, be closed for events. Consequently, the restrictions could apply to any street, not just the Festival

Street. She is hesitant to make a blanket statement that they be restricted but rather that each street could be considered on a case-by-case basis for these types of provisions.

Mr. Lawrence drew attention to Page 4, line 133, “consider pedestrian walkway, intersection at North Washington Street,” and wanted to know where on North Washington this referred to.

Ms. Block Sanford reported that this issue came up a couple of months ago, that the pedestrian walkway that is shown from the roundabout leading to South Washington Street opposite the church ends there and there was no mid-block crossing. So the question became what would pedestrians do. She further states it has been addressed within the Transportation Plan. A pedestrian could, arriving at South Washington Street, either need to go to the light at Broad Street or south to the light at the intersection at Annandale and Washington to cross the street.

She further added that the text is incorrect; it says North Washington, it should say South Washington.

Mr. Lawrence asked for clarification as to Page 7, line 274, regarding redevelopment of Virginia Village and the replacement of the pre-existing affordable dwelling units. He thought “replacement” gave the wrong connotation of going away while the intent is to still have it exist somewhere.

Ms. Block Sanford understood his concern and suggested replacing the language with “should retain affordable units.” And Mr. Lawrence suggested “not have a net loss.”

Chair Rodgers asked about proposed parking on Festival Streets. The legend shows proposed on-street parking with green trees all along the Festival Street, but there is no mention of parking on Festival Streets. She is assuming because the legend shows parking on other streets, that there would be parking on those Festival Streets.

Ms. Block Sanford replied that Chair Rodgers is correct and on-street parking is recommended for every street within the City Center except it is not recommended for the Little Falls Street extension.

Ms. Teates noted that at the last worksession there was discussion about adding a statement that development near the Big Chimneys Park and transportation would be looked at with the Master Plan for the park, and that text doesn’t appear.

Ms. Block Sanford states that Staff does support that change and while it is outside the scope of the transportation amendment, it is on the list with all the other items mentioned that are outside the scope.

Ms. Fauber appreciates the fact that other Commissioners have gone through the Plan with a fine tooth comb but takes exception to the whole premise that this is just speaking to the transportation elements. Going through the whole Comprehensive Plan, there are

sections of open space and everything has been changed, not just the transportation elements.

She notes there was a letter from one citizen saying we had a Plan that went through extensive public input and all of a sudden it had open space in certain places and there were some people buying in. Not everybody but a lot of people bought in and it was reflected in the Comprehensive Plan. Now she feels we're bringing in something that removes some of that. Add adding streets here and there, street parking that removes emphasis on structured parking, she is not sure there is the same "buy-in".

She feels she's looking a more than a transportation plan which she states is her fundamental problem. There were things in the Comprehensive Plan that were removed, not because of transportation reasons but because there were other consultants coming in who she didn't really hear say they couldn't support more open space.

And while she thinks there are some good things present, she feels unprepared again to vote on it. If somebody asked her to vote on it now, she would have to vote against it because at the present time she doesn't feel it's been vetted with the public.

She further states that she feels it smacks of something that is in response to a proposal from a private developer and they are too tied together and not independent enough.

Street Works, she thought, was very independent. There were no development proposals on the table at the time. However, this feels to her too related to something that's been proposed and trying to make that work. While she realizes there are elements that the developer doesn't like, she feels it is pretty much "a hand and glove thing." She is not comfortable with it and is having difficulty as she did the last time it was gone through, and is not able to make a recommendation.

Chair Rodgers noted that there is still time left on the extension and asked Ms. Fauber if she would like to make a motion to defer. She added she believes there are several Planning Commissioners that are feeling a little uncomfortable right now with voting.

Ms. Fauber responded that while a deferral may change other people's views, she didn't think that a week or two weeks' time would change hers, and asked for other Commissioners to express their views.

Mr. Puentes reiterated his comments from a couple of weeks ago. He thinks there are some excellent elements that reflects a lot of new work, a lot of new thinking. He thinks this has been formed by the City Center work that has gone on to date because it became clear in going through that process what was needed to do to revise these documents to respond to the proposals that were coming in. He doesn't think it necessarily facilitates it. It responds to those that think we didn't understand or didn't have the proper policy documents to inform. So there is a lot of new thinking here, not just for the City in general.

While he notes that Ms. Sanford says “this is state of the art, industry standard,” Mr. Puentes respectfully disagrees and thinks this is very sophisticated and notes many communities are going this way. He believes this is far advance from what he’s seen in other placed. The design of the street typology, all of these things are very good. The overall framing, Ms. Sanford is saying this is a policy shift away from the traditional suburban transportation plan and changing this area away from what it is now, which is an automobile-dominated wasteland, to something pedestrian-oriented and non-motorized vehicle-oriented, and it is all very, very positive.

What he thinks is confusing and what Ms. Fauber kind of hinted at is the non-transportation elements present and he thinks this is the confusion that keeps coming up. Mr. Puentes remarked that Ms. Block Sanford said this is a transportation document. And while it certainly is, there is open space in here and that is not clear. Affordable housing is not clear. There’s mention of Great Place, green building, which is also not clear. There are a lot of non-transportation items, and Mr. Puentes is trying to sort out how to join them. Transportation is related to all these things, but how they come together is not clear. Parking and other transportation items need to be dealt with a little more carefully.

Acknowledging that he said these are things that can be handled separately, he hopes that is the case because he’s inclined to do that, to go forward with this now as “the perfect is the enemy of the good.” He feels thee is a lot of good in here and if we try to make I perfect, we will waste a lot of time. Mr. Puentes thinks there are some things that can be handled as we go forward. If we move forward with it today, it is a policy document, as Ms. Sanford said, but this whole thing about transportation element versus what we consider the non-transportation elements, should be sorted out down the road.

Mr. Puentes summed up that by saying he’d like to move forward so as to open those things up but he takes Ms. Fauber’s comments very seriously.

Ms. Budetti noted most of the changes in the text are related to transportation. In looking at where the changes are and what the topic of the main changes are, the idea that they relate mostly to transportation is pretty clear. There are changes on the City Center Concept Plan Map that are new ideas. She suggests that Ms. Fauber delineate what it is she thinks has been tailored and Ms. Block Sanford help us in showing what came from the Transportation Plan itself.

Ms. Budetti would also add that part of the problem is in changing one element, it draws on other things that are related. And that some of the concepts and writings in here are not always clear and there is a lot of redundancy. She asked Ms. Fauber to give specifics of what things she sees as problematic.

Ms. Fauber stated she thinks the fundamental shift away from the whole open space concept has fundamentally changed in this document and she feels nobody has any buy-in on that, there was not an open process for that. Big Chimneys Park is seen in a whole different context than it was before, having been left off previously and now put back

in. There was discussion regarding boundary adjustments to the City Center and it hasn't been adjusted. Things outside the boundaries are shown.

Regarding the roundabout on the south side, she questions what is the new open space there. To her, it seems to come out of thin air. And it seems too related in her mind to the proposal on the table. And while she is not saying that is totally bad, it just seems like this wasn't done.

She feels there was a pretty good concept plan. If talking about just adopting a street network, she wouldn't have a problem voting on that. But there is a fundamental shift by putting all the burden on the north side for the open space when there is no land consolidation. And it is literally taking it off the south side where the City owns property, the biggest public land holdings for the City are on the south side, and basically giving that to private hands. She doesn't understand why wouldn't we put it on the south side where we can get it done quicker, where we can do it because the City owns the property.

That is a fundamental shift that doesn't have anything to do with transportation. That has everything to do with open space and our use of property.

Ms. Friel responded that certainly the intent was to have this text reflect what was a year and a half of study, very public and in-depth worksessions that involved the Planning Commission, City Council, citizens, and property owners who were informed of this process.

Ms. Friel notes that the additive text is more stringent, talking about how important open space is, about how important the stepping down the buildings is, adding language about on-street parking, adding language about the transportation plan. She thinks the disconnect here is quite simply the Great Place, and one idea may be just to keep the language that is already there. It isn't that much different. And while it mentions Big Chimneys Park, the new language under Great Place doesn't.

She would like to clarify for the record that the first City Center Concept Plan does not show any open space on the south side. This actually shows open space on the south side. That came through the consultant asking how does this work, how does this mention what size the north side open space be. It's already been identified where it should be located but how does it work with the flow of traffic and pedestrians.

Ms. Friel asserts there was no intent to change the basic contents of what was wanted. She thinks that Great Place changes were actually made by Helen Reinecke-Wilt, the author of the original Comp Plan, and maybe that is something that is making folks uncomfortable. Her language is additive and strengthening to having public open space and at closer look, at density and multi-modal accessibility. If this is a guide, this needs to be a good one, the best one that we can get. It provides a better level detail to deal with any developer.

Ms. Friel explained the way the planning works, first you have a Comprehensive Plan. Then federal funds were received, and it is not easy dealing with federal funds. It was done as fast as possible. The Comp Plan is then fine tuned, there is policy and then there is the Code. There is no control if a developer wants to send something in. A developer can come in at any time the Plan is being developed.

And she would further mention that she sees this as being critically important, that there is a special exception so that is really wide open which is something that needs to be addressed as well.

Ms. Friel asserts the developer was sort of force-fed these concepts as quickly as they were coming up with them through the major design team. It was completely a public citizen process with Chamber members and a wide broad-based group. That portion has been successfully negotiated. There are thousands of other pieces and huge concerns on a proposal that actually is not really in existence right now. There was a January submittal and a lot of discussions and it is now October, nearly a year, which is a tough thing to be hanging over something that is supposed to be pretty simple, almost a housekeeping exercise.

Upon further reflection, Ms. Friel thinks maybe that Great Place definition will change as the thing that has people mixed up. They are trying to envision it differently and she notes it hasn't really had a chance to work yet.

Chair Rodgers asked Ms. Friel if the design team had anything to do with the map.

Ms. Friel said the consultant and the design team looked at major design elements and those certainly included how the buildings were oriented and broken up and how they worked together. The design team had a draft version. Earlier things were still sketched in conceptually. They had the consultant meet with them and they talked about what was important in terms of design and that is how it worked out. She doesn't think it's anybody's preference that it worked that way. Staff managed to deal with what was on the table. They did so with the best information they had and worked hard with the major design team to try to fix a development that is still in progress and not finalized yet.

Ms. Puentes noted as member of the major design team, what Ms. Friel said was correct; the Plan is not word for word but this is the general guide that the design team put forward.

Ms. Budetti remarked she thought that most of the changes related to transportation. There were other changes that she doesn't really object to because they seem to be open space park on the south. The idea that there is a Festival Street, it makes sense to know that there is open space across there. You'd want to explain why you were putting the Festival Street where you did, whereas you could put it in another block. She doesn't have a problem with that. She also likes the redundancy in the smaller blocks.

In regard to Ms. Budetti's criticism of the Plan's writing, her suggested changes are not so much substantive but she finds certain wording distracting and problematic as far as conveying ideas. She thinks that changes to some of the parts of the Comprehensive Plan in the section which deals with Open Space and Economic Development would be a good idea at this time but as she understands that is not the Commission's charge and so the Commission is limited to just looking at transportation. Consequently she is favorable to moving on.

She also would make available to staff her English language recommendations, for their use or not.

Ms. Teates stated she was in between the two positions in that she thinks some really great things have been presented and some really great improvements. And from earlier discussion she thinks the Commission knows she doesn't think Big Chimneys Park belongs on the map. She would love to see a bigger open space placement on there and maybe the Festival Street at a different location, just to show there are other opportunities for open space on the south side.

She admits confusion regarding those changes. She doesn't think all the changes were transportation-related. She doesn't have any problem with the previous language change from the City Center guiding principals. The current language, she thinks both of them are just very open concepts and doesn't think either one makes much of difference in this Plan.

She tends to think the Commission should go ahead and recommend this and move on only because she'd like to get to the next list of things. And her belief is this might be the first step to doing a more comprehensive review, this being a kind of wish list right now.

Mr. Lawrence joined in with Ms. Teate's comments but added he is really on the side of wanting to move it on. It's not perfect but the whole point is this is a concept that is supposed to look out 25 years. Some of this may happen, all of it is never going to happen, especially if it is in writing. It is a guide and the fact that some of it meshes with what a developer brought in doesn't make something a bad idea.

Ms. Lawrence mentioned he attend the EDA meeting last week and that project is far from being near to something that he would ever even consider voting for. And he thinks to hold that out as a real problem, that alone is a real problem.

Mr. Lawrence also is not as concerned about the fact that some of the things aren't directly related to traffic because part of the problem in Falls Church is everything is related to traffic one way or another. He wouldn't say to take out affordable housing because it doesn't have the word "traffic" or "car" in it. He feels there is a great deal of uncertainty as to what the problem is. It's almost like it's different and because of that it's bad. While realizing it's not as simplistic as that and he doesn't have the history on it, if somebody wishes to defer, he will vote for deferment; otherwise he would also happily vote to move it on.

Chair Rodger's concern is the map and its power. It seems to her that map is more powerful than the words that are in the Comp Plan and she is a little bit concerned that it doesn't encourage a more creative approach to this space that is there.

Chair Rodgers further notes as follows: While looking at the north side and knowing that this is almost an impossibility given all of the small parcels up there, we're still putting in there what we want. Down in the south side, we haven't been allowed to say what we want. We've heard a lot of people say they want more open space but we haven't done that. Why isn't it doable? Just because we put it in doesn't mean it's going to happen. But it means we're dreaming about it. We want it.

She is concerned that the map, a powerful piece of paper, is going to override anything put in the text. And while realizing that the Comp Plan has to be realistic as well as wishful, it seems to her like we wished on the north side but we didn't do anything on the south side. She is worried that we're not going to be able to rely on the Comp Plan as a guide to get what is wanted down there.

MOTION: Mr. Puentes moved, and Mr. Lawrence seconded, the Planning Commission recommend approval of TR7-18 to the City Council and that City Staff work with the Boards and with the Commission to revisit the broad issues that were addressed in public hearing and to retain the original language about a Great Place.

Discussion:

Ms. Budetti notes Great Place is used in a number of places, from the whole City Center to the City Commons to a niche on page 14, line 610, where there is text "a feature can make a project a Great Place." She still doesn't have any idea what a Great Place is, which is why she said maybe it's a term of art that she's not familiar with. She is not sure what are the elements of a Great Place, what do you have to have to be a Great Place. She just cautions either using it as it's meant or explaining what it is. It's one of the reasons she has trouble with that concept.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed 4-2 (Ms. Fauber and Ms. Rodgers voted 'no').

8. **OTHER BUSINESS:** None.

9. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:** Chair Rodgers requested deferring approval of the Minutes of September 17, 2007 since they were received immediately prior to this evening's meeting and she hasn't had a chance to look through them. Mr. Lawrence noted an error on page 24, line 18, changing the text from Seeberg Team to CBIRT.

On voice vote, it was unanimously agreed to defer approval of the minutes to the next Planning Commission meeting, October 15, 2007.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Budetti moved, and Mr. Lawrence seconded, to adjourn. The motion passed by voice vote and the meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Noted and Approved:

Ann Hieber

Elizabeth R. Friel, AICP

Recording Secretary

Planning Director

The City of Falls Church complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This document will be made available in an alternate format upon request. Call 703.248.5040 or the Virginia Relay Center on 711 or 1.800.828.1120.